

[Game Songs and Rhymes]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview Copy 2

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER DOROTHY WEST

ADDRESS 131 West 110th Street, New York

DATE October 7 and 14, 1938

SUBJECT SONGS AND RHYMES * (Game Songs & Rhymes of Children)

1. Date and time of interview

October 7 and 14, 1938 - 7-10 PM

2. Place of interview

Informant's Home

3. Name and address of informant

Mrs. Laura M. (prefers not to have her full name used) 300 West 114th Street

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

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6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Quiet street and mixed neighborhood. Interview held in attractively furnished living room of informant: 2 occasional chairs, a couch, a cabinet radio, bookcase, and gate-leg table. Small apartment of 3 rooms.

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FORM B Personal History of informant

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER DOROTHY WEST

ADDRESS 131 West 110th Street, New York

DATE October 7 and 14, 1938

SUBJECT "MRS. LAURA M." (SONGS AND RHYMES * (Game Songs & Rhymes of Children))

1. Ancestry

2. Place and date of birth

South Carolina, approximately 50 years ago

3. Family

Lives apart from other relatives in city.

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4. Places lived in, with dates

South Carolina for over 30 years; Ohio for 10 years; remainder of life in New York City.

5. Education, with dates

High school, and normal, and school

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Housewife

7. Special skills and interests

8. Community and religious activities

Active member of Presbyterian church.

9. Description of informant

Small, plump, fair woman.

10. Other Points gained in interview

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER Dorothy West

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ADDRESS New York City

DATE October 7 and 14, 1938

SUBJECT GAME SONGS AND RHYMES (Children) (Interview with Mrs. Laura M.)

I used to hear Mama sing this song and play it on the organ. I don't know where it started but I used to hear it all the time.

The Little Brown Jug

I. Me and my wife and the little brown jug Crossed the river on a hickory log. She fell in and I got wet; Hung to the little brown jug, you bet.

Chorus: Ha-ha-ha, you and me, Little brown jug, don't I love thee? Ha-ha-ha, you and me, Little brown jug, don't I love thee?

II. Me and my wife lived all alone In a little hut we called our own, She loved gin and I loved rum; We two together had a lot of fun.

Chorus: Ha-ha-ha, you and me, Little brown jug, don't I love thee? Ha-ha-ha, you and me, Little brown jug, I do love thee.

We used to sing this one, too: O where, o where is my little dog gone? O where, o where has he gone? With his tail cut short and his ears cropped off, O where, o where has he gone?

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Chorus: He's gone, he's gone O where has he gone? O where has my little dog gone?

(That was the funny part - 'dog gone'.)

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II. O where, o where is my little dog gone? O where, o where has he gone? With his eyes punched out and his nose cut off, O where, o where has he gone?

Chorus: He's gone, he's gone, O where has he gone? O where has my little dog gone?

We used to sing this a lot when we were kids ... No, you didn't play any game with it. You just sat around singing it; a bunch could sing it, or just one or two. The number didn't matter since no game was attached to it.

1. My grandfather had some very fine sheep, Some very fine sheep had he. It was a baa, baa here, A baa, baa there; a baa, baa everywhere.

Chorus: Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

II. My grandfather had some very fine cows, Some very fine cows had he. It was a moo, moo here, A moo, moo there; a moo, moo everywhere.

Chorus: Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

III. My grandfather had some very fine pigs, Some very fine pigs had he. It was an oink, oink here, An oink, oink there; an oink, oink everywhere.

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Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

IV. My grandfather had some very fine ducks, Some very fine ducks had he. It was a quack, quack here, A quack, quack there; a quack, quack everywhere.

Chorus: Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

V. My grandfather had some very fine chickens, Some very fine chickens had he. It was a cluck, cluck here, A cluck, cluck there; a cluck, cluck everywhere.

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Chorus; Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

VI. My grandfather had some very fine horses, Some very fine horses had he. It was a neigh, neigh here, A neigh, neigh there; a neigh, neigh everywhere.

Chorus: Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

VII. My grandfather had some very fine mules, Some very fine mules had he. It was a hee-haw here, A hee-haw there; a hee-haw everywhere.

Chorus: Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

VIII. My grandfather had some very fine dogs, Some very fine dogs had he. It was a woof-woof here, A woof-woof there; a woof-woof everywhere.

Chorus: Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

IX. My grandfather had some very fine cats, Some very fine cats had he. It was a meow-meow here, A meow-meow there; a meow-meow everywhere.

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Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

X. My grandfather had some very fine pigeons, Some very fine pigeons had he. It was a coo-coo here, A coo-coo there; a coo-coo everywhere.

Chorus: Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

XI. A baa, baa here, A moo, moo there, An oink, oink here, A quack, quack there, A cluck, cluck here, A neigh, neigh there, A hee-haw here, A woof-woof there, A meow-meow here, A coo-coo there. A baa, baa; a moo, moo; oink, oink; a quack, quack; cluck, cluck; neigh, neigh; hee-haw, hee-haw; woof-woof; meow, meow; coo-coo everywhere.

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Chorus: Come along boys, come along girls, To the merry green fields away.

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Most of the games that I played when/ I was a child are played today, except for one or two that I remembered ... No, I don't know whether they're played the same way or not because I haven't stopped to watch 'em play nowadays.

I. We used to play a game, I don't know what it was called, where one kid would hide. It was like hide-and-seek backwards. That kid would hide somewhere and then the whole bunch of us would walk around together singing,

“Ain't no bogey-man out tonight”.

You never knew where the bogey-man was and sometimes he would sneak up on you and whoever he caught had to be the bogey-man next. You hardly ever went around singing by yourself, but with a whole bunch. There'd be two or three bunches, depending on how many were playing, of five or six. When the bogey-man started chasing you, you'd be scared to death, really thinking it was the bogey-man. If he caught you and you had to be the bogey-man, you'd be almost as scared chasing as you were being chased.

II. Two kids could play this game, or as many as eight. If two played it, one said one line and the other said another, so on 'til you said the last line. It was more fun if eight played it because you were so busy saying the last your line, you didn't have time to figure out who'd say the last line - that was the funny one. If eight played it, it went like this:

1st child: “I went upstairs”

2nd child: “What did you see?”

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3rd child: "I saw a monkey"

4th child: "Just like me"

5th child: "I one him"

6th child: "I two him"

7th child: "I three him"

8th child: "I four him"

1st child: "I five him"

2nd child: "I six him"

3rd child: "I seven him"

4th child: "I eight (ate) him"

Then you'd start all over again. The fifth child would say, "I went upstairs", and so on. Nobody wanted to say "Just like me" or "I eight (ate) him". It was a lot of fun. You'd keep on 'til everybody had said "Just like me" and 'til everybody ate him.

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III.

We played a game called the Prisoner's Game:

You formed a circle and held hands with one child in the center. That child was in prison and tried to get out. When he thought you weren't holding hands tight, he'd run and try to break through. After he tried that a couple of times and couldn't get out, he'd come up to you and say:

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"Prisoner: "Is this door locked?"

Group: "Yes, child, yes."

Prisoner: "Can I get out of here?"

Group: "No, child, no."

Then he'd try to break out again. When he got out, you chased him and whoever caught him got to be the prisoner. Then you'd do it all over again 'til you got tired.... Yes, it was a privilege to be the prisoner because you had more to do; you were more active.

IV.

In this game there were two kids who were the travelers or "IT". The rest of the children who played were the witches. The two who were "IT" stood on two bases facing each other. The others stood in two groups on the side between the bases and the point was to catch the two when they changed bases.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (the witches)

X(child on one base) X(child on other base)

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (more witches)

The words went like this:

"How many mules from here to Mile-a-bry?"

"Threescore and ten."

"Can I get there by candle light?"

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“Yes, if your legs are long as light.”

“Watch out! Mighty bad witches on the road tonight.”

When the last line was said, the two on base would run to the other base and try not to get caught by the witches. Sometimes the witches made such a noise that they scared you almost to death ... You said the words this way:

1st child on base: “How many miles,” etc.

2nd child on base: “Three score and ten.

3rd child: “Can I get there,” etc.

2nd child: “Yes, if your legs”, etc.

Witches: “Watch out,” etc.

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If you were a good runner, you would get to the other base. You ran zig-zag if you wanted to. Anyway would do, as long as you got to the base.

V.

Here we go 'round the rosey-bush,

The rosey-bush, the rosey-bush,

Here we go 'round the rosey-bush

So early in the morning.

The last one stoop shall tell her beau,

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Tell her beau, tell her beau,

The last one stoop shall tell her beau

So early in the morning.

The last one to squat when you said, "The last one stoop" had to tell who her beau was. If boys played it too, and a boy was the last one to squat down, he had to name his girl.

VI.

Here's another game. Little girls around six or seven played it. It wasn't a game really, wasn't anything to it, but we love it, I guess because our mothers didn't like it. A lot of little girls joined hands and went around in a circle chanting, "Shake, shake, shake, for the batter-cake". Then you'd drop hands and shake your-self all over. When you got through shaking, you'd join hands again and start all over again. Some children said, "Shake, shake, shake, for the good egg bread."

VIII.

Then there was the game that everybody knows I guess. One person went around and took something from all the children who were going to play [?] game. Maybe he'd take a handkerchief from you, a button from me - anything that you had to give him as a pawn. One child sat in the center and the one who collected the pawns stood over the one in the center. He held one of the pawns in his closed hand over the one sitting down and said,

Child standing: "Heavy, heavy hangs over your head."

Child sitting: "Fine or super-fine?"

Child standing: "Fine (or super-fine, depending upon what the object was)

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“What shall the owner of this pawn do?”

The child who was sitting would name some task or feat and then the child who was standing would open his hand and the owner of the pawn would be identified and would have to do the 8 thing requested. If the owner refused or could not do what was asked, he would have to pay a fine of some kind.

A RIDDLE.

Here's a riddle:

“The black men live in the red men's house,

The red men live in the pink men's house,

The pink men live in the white man's house,

The white men live in the green men's house.

What is it?”

A.: A watermelon; the seeds being the black men, the center being the red men, the outer edge of the meat being the pink men, the white men being the white part of the rind, and the green men being the outer rind.

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FORM D Extra Comment

STATE NEW YORK

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NAME OF WORKER DOROTHY WEST

ADDRESS New York City

DATE October 14, 1938

SUBJECT INTERVIEW WITH MRS. LAURA M. (GAME SONGS & RHYMES)

The informant did not know any ghost stories, slave stories or tall tales and did not recall ever having been told stories of this kind when she was a child. "Some parents told their children stories about ghosts and witches and slavery, but mine didn't. None of the children I know were told stories like that. It was only a certain class of people who believed things like that and allowed their children to hear stories about all that foolishness."

Informant showed much interest in interviewer's work. She promised to recall the games which she played as a child and was agreeable to interviewer's coming again to get other material.